

### REMARKS

Claims 1-20 are now in this application, of which Claims 12-18 have been withdrawn from consideration in response to an election, which Applicant hereby affirms, of the product claims.<sup>1/</sup>

Claims 1 and 10, the independent claims under examination, have been amended to define still more clearly what Applicant regards as his invention, in terms which distinguish over the art of record. The changes made to these claims are intended merely to clarify the language, as what Applicant intends to claim using the new language is the same as what he intended to claim using the original language in these claims. Thus, the changes to Claims 1 and 10 should not be regarded as narrowing the scope of any claim element. Corresponding changes have been made to independent Claims 12 and 15, to conform them in scope to Claims 1 and 10; corresponding changes have been made to Claims 10, 14, 15, 17 and 18 (and for that reason, Claims 12, 14, 15, 17 and 18 have been labeled "currently amended" rather than "withdrawn", although they have, as noted, been withdrawn from consideration). Claims 19 and 20 have been added to assure Applicant of a full measure of protection of the scope to which he deems himself entitled.

Claims 1-6, 8, 10 and 11 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Japanese Laid-Open Application 57-176160 (hereinafter "JP '160"), and also as anticipated by U.S. Patent 4,923,756 (Chung et al.). Claim 7 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being obvious from a combination of *JP '160* or *Chung* with

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<sup>1/</sup>Pursuant to MPEP § 821.04, Applicant understands that upon allowance of the elected article claims, he will be entitled to rejoinder of method-of-manufacture claims (the non-elected claims) of equivalent scope to the allowed claims.

U.S. Patent 4,643,940 (Shaw et al.), and Claim 9, as being obvious from a combination of *JP '160* or *Chung* with U.S. Patent Application 2001/0054264 (Votolato et al.).

As is discussed in detail in the present application, the present invention is intended to provide an easy-to-use decorative panel having sufficient rigidity to be used without being mounted in some fashion on a separate supporting layer, and yet suitable for being provided with an aesthetic appearance as is commonly done with high-pressure laminates ("HPL"). This is done by securing a first panel, generally of HPL, which has two or more layers laminated together, to a layer of fiberglass-reinforced plastic ("FRP") by means of a suitable adhesive. The result has the qualities which Applicant wishes to achieve.

More specifically, independent Claim 1 is directed to a reinforced composite material that comprises a first panel, made of two or more layers, and a strengthening panel, which includes a reinforcement embedded therein. Also recited is a layer of adhesive disposed between the first panel and the strengthening panel to adhere those two panels together.

In Applicant's view, both of the primary references, *JP '160* and *Chung*, relate to structures in which a sheet of *single*-layer material is adhered to a substrate of FRP, and fail to teach or suggest a structure like that recited in Claim 1, in which an FRP substrate has adhered to it, by means of an adhesive layer, a "first layer, made of two or more sheets".

*JP '160* relates to a structure in which a surface of a PVF sheet is coated with adhesive, which can be of any of several identified types, and after pre-curing of the adhesive, the coated sheet is laminated with a glass-fiber-reinforced sheet of unsaturated

polyester resin sheet (as an alternative, *JP '160* discusses coating the adhesive layer with a composition of unsaturated polyester resin and glass fiber, to be hardened afterwards).

Nothing has been found in that document, however, that would teach or suggest adhering a panel made of two or more sheets, to a substrate of FRP, using an adhesive layer, as recited in Claim 1. Accordingly, it is believed clear that Claim 1 is allowable over *JP '160*.

*Chung* relates to a primerless adhesive for FRP substrates, and discusses, in the portion particularly relied upon in the Office Action, laminating a substrate of FRP or another material by applying an adhesive to a first unprimed substrate, and then laminating a second unprimed substrate to the coated one. As far as Applicant can tell, however, it is contemplated that both substrates be of types mentioned in the patent, and while FRP is one of those types, nothing has been found or pointed out in *Chung* that would teach or suggest using a panel, made of two or more layers, as one of the two substrates *Chung* laminates together. Accordingly, Claim 1 also is deemed clearly allowable over *Chung*.

Independent Claim 10 is directed to a reinforced composite material that comprises a first panel, made of two or more layers, and a strengthening panel including a fibrous reinforcement embedded in a polymeric material. Also provided is a layer of adhesive disposed between the first panel and the strengthening panel to adhere both panels together.

Claim 10 is believed to be clearly allowable over both *JP '160* and *Chung*, for the same reasons as is Claim 1.

A review of the other art of record, including *Shaw* and *Votolato*, has failed to reveal anything which, in Applicant's opinion, would remedy the deficiencies of the art

discussed above, as references against independent Claims 1 and 10. Those claims are therefore believed patentable over the art of record.

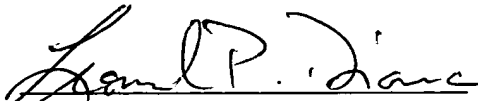
The other claims under examination in this application are each dependent from one or another of the independent claims discussed above and are therefore believed patentable for the same reasons. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual consideration or reconsideration, as the case may be, of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

Moreover, the elected claims now being allowable, rejoinder and allowance of the method claims also is believed to be in order.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, Applicant respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and early passage to issue of the present application.

Applicant's undersigned attorney may be reached in our New York office by telephone at (212) 218-2100. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our below listed address.

Respectfully submitted,

  
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